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ABSTRACT

In this document the topic of recognized professions is discussed in terms of the occupations considered to rank as professions and the particular training, obligations, and ethics assumed to have been acquired by a person before he or she can be recognized as a professional. In analyzing the teaching profession, the author outlines the demands and expectations placed upon teachers and defines teaching as a genuine profession (ranking with law and medicine in the fact that students are, in effect, "clients." The implications for teacher education and the selection, recruitment, and certification of teachers are examined in the light of the definition of teaching as a profession. (JD)

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PROFESSIONS, JUDGMENT, AND THE SELECTION PROCESS

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To enter a profession is regarded as having achieved the occupational apex of our society. Rewards in status and independence make the longer, more arduous training with its emphasis on the acquisition of a body of systematic theory and proficiency in the giving of advice and counsel worth the effort required. While public school teaching has not traditionally provided either the status or the independence of professions such as medicine and the law, nonetheless, public school teachers regard themselves and are regarded by others as professional workers. Moreover, the character of the training process, the belief system and the way in which the work of the public school teacher is organized are more similar to the other professions than they are to any other type of work. And, on a relative scale, the status and independence granted the public school teacher are significant when compared to many other kinds of workers.

Not every occupation is or can be a profession. It is to that small group of occupations whose function involves the support and protection of the values which give order, meaning, and continuity to social life we typically give the designation profession. While the concept profession represents an ideal type, that is a model of a form of occupational organization, and individual occupations more or less conform to that model, still certain occupations, teaching among them, are generally considered established professions. Some other occupations are, at any given point in time and with variable success, aspiring professions. Thus, no occupation is completely professionalized and some occupations are to some degree professionalized while for most other occupations the professional model is inappropriate.

The bedrock of a profession is a body of special knowledge to which, by and large, only members of the profession are privy; that is over which the profession exercises a monopoly. What further sets professional work apart from other work is that the special knowledge of the professional is built on an understanding of the underlying theory. Teachers as professionals do not simply learn the techniques of teaching. Rather the techniques of teaching which they learn grow out of theories of learning and those theories of learning must also be understood by the teacher. Therefore, professions grow up around systematic bodies of theory.

Second, professions develop special educational institutions which offer training built on the relevant knowledge base. Thus professions induct selected candidates into the special knowledge of the profession through sustained, systematic, demanding training in special educational institutions. Professional training prepares a service elite.

Further, the act of completion of a professional training program is the certification to the society that the neophyte professional has mastered the relevant theoretical and practical knowledge and is, therefore, competent to support and protect the social values relevant to his particular profession. This act of certification, whether it is done by the educational institution, a board of professional peers or an agency of the State is a declaration of competence. In the professions certification of competence is thus formal and only those who successfully complete the training process are certified.

With certification, the society grants the individual professional the authority to decide what is good or bad for the client. The special knowledge to which the professional is privy enables the professional to make the most informed judgments and to give the best, most knowledgeable advice available.

Thus, in the domain with which a profession is concerned, each professional is wiser than any other member of the society. Therefore, the client seeks the judgment and advice of the professional, permitting that professional to make decisions which may affect the client's life because the society has formally certified the professional as a member of the group most competent to provide the particular service. The grant of professional authority thus derives from the society's acknowledgement of the superior knowledge and skills of the professional. Though professional peers share the knowledge and skills, there are no others in the society whose judgment and advice in matters central to the profession are equal to those of the professional. Thus, the monopoly on the knowledge of pedagogy, gives teachers the professional authority to make judgments and give advice relative to what is good or bad educational practice. In pedagogical matters teachers as professionals have peers but no superiors.

Thus, in sum, occupations which are professions are 1) organized around systematic bodies of knowledge, which include both theory and its relevant application; 2) provide special educational institutions in which screened and selected neophytes engage in long and arduous training; 3) formally certify those who complete the training process as competent to perform the service rendered by the profession; 4) in exchange for which, the society accepts as authoritative the judgments and advice given by the professional and; 5) sanctions the professions to set standards of performance within the profession, to regulate their own educational institutions, determine the length of the training process, oversee the content and quality of the training program, and control entry into the profession; 6) to protect the public from abuses a code of ethics exists and; 7) to protect the monopoly of knowledge and skills held by the profession and to facilitate the development and maintenance of the profession itself a professional culture develops which also provides rewards and sociability for the professional and a special language which permits communication within the profession.

As a member of an elite corps who hold a monopoly of knowledge and skills, the fundamental task of the professional is to exercise the best possible judgment on behalf of the client. To provide the client with advice and counsel which, if followed, will permit resolution of the problem and/or improvement in the client's condition. The professional is not constrained to guarantee a successful outcome, but is constrained to be able to demonstrate to a body of peers that the judgments made and the advice and counsel given are appropriate to the need of the client and to the nature and complexity of the problem. In other words, the professional is culpable only if, through either ignorance or negligence, there is failure to recognize the client's need, failure to define the client's problem appropriately and/or failure to offer the client adequate advice.

In a world of work in which the professional has, by societal agreement, superior knowledge to that of the client and in which the appropriateness and adequacy of use of that knowledge in meeting the client's need or solving the client's problem is judged by peers in behalf of the profession, relations with clients and with peers become crucial elements in the organization of work.

Professional work assumes that the client recognizes the need for the professional's services. The client goes to the professional, either on a voluntary basis or because those who exercise control over the client "bring" the client to the professional. Having come to the professional, it is assumed that the client wishes advice and will be cooperative with the professional and compliant in following the advice. Thus, professional work is organized around eliciting information from the client which sheds light on the client's need, on problem definition and on the mobilization of the professional's knowledge and skill in problem solving and in communicating with the client. Professional

work is not organized around seeking out clients, persuading them of the need for the professional's services or of the efficacy of those services, nor is it organized in ways which permit the professional to force the client to comply. Therefore, teachers, as professionals assume that children recognize the need to learn and having recognized their need will, by and large, cooperate with the teacher doing what is requested of them. The teacher's efforts then are addressed to the professional tasks of learning about and coming to understand the child and his particular needs, on defining the particular problem or problems, on providing activities and advice which will meet those needs and/or solve the child's problem(s), and in communicating instructions and advice to the child in ways that are comprehensible to that child. Thus, professional work is organized around the principle of a voluntary relationship between the professional and the client. The maxim change occurs only when the client desires to be changed is an organizing principle of professional work.

A second organizing principle of professional work is that each client's needs and/or problem(s) are unique. No two individuals or situations are the same, nor are the needs or problems of one client the same as those of other clients. As such, no part of the encounter between professional and client can be prescriptive. This, in turn, means that elaborate rules systems, since they are universalistic rather than particularistic, are inappropriate, and that any given rule is useful only as a guide to behavior. The teacher, as a professional, is client oriented, concerned with meeting the needs of her clients, the children in her room. She is not task oriented, i.e., concerned with performing a set of tasks which are laid down as rules. Thus, to a professional an elaborate rules system is an institutionally imposed barrier to meeting the idiosyncratic needs of the client and any single rule, especially if it states that ALL professionals or ALL clients should, is made to be broken.

It follows, therefore, that professional work is organized around the exercise of judgment by the individual professional in keeping with the needs of the client, rather than around rules which, by definition, are intended to apply to all.

A third organizing principle of professional work is that the authority of the professional derives from personal competence, not from the office held or the function performed. Moreover, that the professional must know the limits of his personal competence, making certain not to exceed them. In the earlier section we argues that in relation to laymen, professionals were, by definition, competent; that by virtue of training they had superior knowledge and skills. In the domain relevant to the profession, all members of a profession have greater knowledge and skill than even the most informed client. Now, however, our concern is with the competence of the individual professional in relation to his professional peers. While certification or licensing documents typically specify the formal limits on competence (e.g., Teacher's certificates which specify level and subjects which may be taught), beyond that, every professional has areas of relative ignorance and ineptitude. The source may be lack of knowledge, growth and change in knowledge since the training period combined with failure to keep abreast, infrequency with which a particular category of need or problem is confronted, or factors in the interest, personality or personal style of the professional. Thus, for example, the teacher who agrees to teach biology even though it is ten years since she has studied that subject or the teacher who teaches emotionally disturbed children even though she is repelled by them are both charlatans because they have exceeded the limits of personal competence. It is not the title teacher or the act of conducting a class which gives the teacher authority in the eyes of her peers, rather it is in doing only those things about which the teacher has the requisite knowledge and skills.

Further, to refrain from rendering a particular service, if to render that service requires the professional to exceed the limits of personal competence is a professional act. The sharing of work, development of specialization and of referral are professional work arrangements designed to compensate for the inevitable variability in personal competence. The two elementary teachers who, for example, team up, with one teaching all of the science and the other teaching all of the reading because each recognizes her relative incompetence is professional behavior of the highest order. Thus, easy access to peers, open communication among colleagues, work rules which are situational and derived by agreement among the professionals, referral and transfer of clients with certain kinds of needs or problems to colleagues who are competent to deal with them, knowledge and use of community resources and services are all part of the exercise of authority within the professions. This necessarily implies that professional work is neither competitive nor hierarchical and is organized around the principle of peer control. Since professional colleagues are status equals and professional work is organized so that the ultimate welfare of the client is often dependent on cooperation among professional peers, the day to day discipline of the professional consists of the subtle and the not-so-subtle pressures that colleagues exert upon one another. The system of reciprocity, of advice seeking, and assistance giving which occurs among professionals fosters mutual interdependence which, in turn, makes the individual professional sensitive to the reactions of his colleagues. Social control is facilitated by interdependence, with chronic violations of professional etiquette arousing colleague resentment, resulting in pressure being brought to bear. Resistance to peer pressure is difficult to sustain. Thus, in professional work prevailing standards of work quality and content, of behavior and morality are concensual and deviation from that consensus leads to avoidance, refusal to

cooperate with or, in the extreme, reprimand from peers. The consequences are loss of face with peers, increased risk that judgments made and advice given to clients will not be supported by colleagues, and a reduction in the quality of service to the client.

For the truly recalcitrant, more formal discipline is exercised by the professional associations, which have the power to censure or to bar the individual from professional work. Since membership in good standing in the professional associations is necessary for professional survival, the spectre of formal disciplinary action serves as a potent force to conformity.

Of all of the professions, teaching has been the least selective in terms of admission to professional training. Historically, any young woman who could get herself admitted to an institution of higher education could be admitted to teacher training. And more recently, even as young men in significant numbers have sought careers in teaching, admissions policies have remained non-selective. There are a variety of ways in which this phenomenon can be explained. So long as teaching was "woman's work," there was the expectation that a young woman taught until she married or until she became a mother, at which point she left the profession. Thus, as a temporary occupation with rapid turnover, it was easy to justify non-selective admissions both from the perspective of the teaching candidate and the profession. From the candidate's point of view the temporary nature of employment demanded only a nominal level of commitment to the work of the teacher and from the perspective of employing school systems, rapid turnover required only a nominal investment in the teacher. If she was unsatisfactory, she would be gone next year anyway. Further in most of the period since WW II, the birth rate has placed a level of strain on education such that teacher demand often exceeded teacher supply. It was easy to argue that anybody in a classroom was better than nobody.

Within the last decade, however, a series of factors have converged so that selective admissions to Colleges of Education becomes a viable and, perhaps even the most responsible alternative. More and more, for women as well as men, teaching is a career; a lifetime work. This is so, in part, because women in ever increasing numbers are remaining in the workforce, while also fulfilling the roles of wife and mother. It is so, in part, because of teacher unionization which has improved salaries and working conditions to the place where teaching as a life work is competitive with other high status occupations. It is, in part also true, because of the less rapid rate of growth in the economy generally, such that alternative employment opportunities are much less plentiful than in periods of rapid growth. Moreover, the autonomy and security provided the profession by the development of a tenure system as the basis for defining conditions of retention of teachers further encourages careerism.

On the other hand, fewer teaching jobs are available and, as a consequence fewer college students offer themselves as candidates to the Colleges of Education. At the same time, the Colleges of Education having been geared up to the mass production of teachers, find themselves at a cross road. It is generally recognized that excellence is handcrafted, not mass produced and faculty in Colleges of Education have long complained of too little time and too little money, given the volume of students. Instead of being overstaffed as some would argue, it may be that for the first time Colleges of Eudcation are adequately staffed and funded to be genuinely professional schools. To be involved in the training of students who, in fact, have been recruited and selected because they have a propensity to achieve excellence as teachers may help prevent Colleges of Education from being "gutted" as a consequence of reduced enrollments.

Further, for each year a teacher works the investment of the school system and the profession in that teacher increases. With tenure the school system and by extension the profession make a commitment which is long term and far reaching in its consequences. The quality of teaching available to the children in the school district and the level of excellence of the profession is affected for a long time to come.

Thus, from the perspective of the teacher candidate who is committing himself or herself to a life work, from the perspective of the teachers unions which are continually under pressure to justify higher salaries and improved working conditions, as well as the tenure system itself, from the perspective of the individual school district which is being called on to make a costly and long term commitment to the individual teacher, and from the perspective of the Colleges of Education whose continued vitality depends on the development of excellence; that is, from the perspective of all of the constituencies that makeup and impact directly upon the profession, the development of a system of recruitment and selective admissions makes sense.

The question then arises as to the criteria to be used as the basis for recruitment and selection of those who have a "propensity for achieving excellence as teachers". In broad terms, the concept profession itself delineates the most critical characteristics required for teaching excellence. These would include both cognitive and non-cognitive qualities. Included in the cognitive domain would be academic ability, the ability to problem solve, the ability to make decisions and to act on those decisions and the ability to communicate clearly and concisely with people of a variety of ages and ability levels. In the non-cognitive realm, the criteria would include honesty, reliability, responsibility, commitment to an ideology of service, and tolerance for ambiguity (comfort with uncertainty). Each of these criteria is rooted in behaviors which lend themselves to assessment.

Once recruited and selected, the concept of profession also dictates the domains of training. Clearly, the theoretical base of teaching rests in the behavioral and social sciences and includes growth and development, personality, individual differences, learning, family, professions and work, small groups, complex organization and community organization. In addition the trainee would need to acquire depth in the content of the discipline or disciplines which he or she plans to teach (e.g., mathematics, French, biology, history, etc.). Further, the professional education of the teacher must include mastery of the strategies and procedures which translate theory into application. Included would be strategies and procedures for finding answers to questions such as what growth and development cues or personality cues are critical in spotting reading readiness or in diagnosing reading problems, what kinds of teaching strategies work best in teaching reading to children who come from backgrounds in which reading is not valued and/or where there are low levels of verbal skills, how does one acquire and exert influence with colleagues and administrators for purposes of securing change, etc. What I have here called strategies and procedures differs from the classical methods courses in that the theoretical or conceptual base of the applications would be made explicit and the strategies and procedures would be client specific, i.e., they would not address teaching generally, or third graders as a class, but would be based on what has been proven effective with children with specific kinds of problems or needs. This, in turn, suggests that the nature of research would undergo change.

The fundamental point here is that the teacher is diagnosing and managing the needs and problems of individual children who are also a part of a group which, in turn, has collective needs which must be recognized and acted upon.

The classical methods approach posits teaching as primarily done with a group, rather than as the much more complex task it, in fact, is. Further, the classical methods approach posits the classroom as a relatively static place, in which all children are more like each other, rather than as a dynamic, changing environment in which no two individual children are like each other. Thus, the question is not for example the use of phonics in the third grade, but with which children having which needs under which set of circumstances is the use of phonics an effective tool.

Posed this way, every act of a teacher is problematic. Data gathering, cue recognition, hypothesis generation, hypothesis testing and problem resolution; in other words the component parts of problem solving need to be taught as the most effective modality for determining appropriate courses of action. Ideally problem solving would be the primary modality for instruction for education students throughout their professional training. Such an approach would begin with simple problems requiring small data bases for resolution of the problem and proceed to difficult, complex problems requiring an extensive data base for resolution during the final period of training during which time the student is teaching under supervision in a "real world" classroom.

Further, the ideology of service, the ethics of teaching, a sense of honesty, reliability, responsibility and acceptance of uncertainty will need to be sustained and expanded. While modeling is the major means by which students learn the professional role requirements, but since all selection systems are not fail safe, it is also likely that exercises which both instruct and assess role development would be necessary.

Finally, education students need experience in working cooperatively with colleagues, and in negotiating with administrators for resources. They need

information about the range of agencies providing services for children and the specific services and quality of service those agencies provide. They need to know how to make referrals and how to follow up in behalf of the child. They need to know how to interact and negotiate with parents of a variety of types. They need to understand the political process through which education is financed and policy is determined in order to impact on those systems in behalf of the child. What this points to, of course, is the need for professional training to be closely tied to the "real world", whether through simulations or through progessive amounts of training occuring in real classrooms, school buildings and systems in real communities. It is for a world of problem solving, decision making, advice giving and action that education students are being prepared and the training process must reflect those requirements.